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ASPECTS OF LEXICAL AND STYLISTIC CHANGES IN CRISIS

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Khalid Ahmed Hassan AHMED ¹

Abstract:

This study aims at exploring linguistic changes in periods of crisis. We feel that great linguistic changes will appear due to the wide spread of the fatal diseases that affect human beings existence on this earth. To fight the disease people should raise their awareness of the disease through language as a linguistic media that helps them to some extent building defenses against the disease. This linguistic shift will be followed with some modifications on the existing form of language either by coining new lexicons or reformulating new terms with new concepts and values. On the stylistic matters some changes are also expected to let people express themselves either socially or economically. The interest of this study will be directed to changes in lexical usage or changes of stylistic issues of the crisis under investigation, namely in this present study the pandemic of Corona Virus that is commonly known as Covid 19.

The study will be a qualitative survey of the changes that this disease has led to. The related theoretical framework and literature will be outlined as guidelines for this study. Its importance, methodology and the procedures will also be stated to show the techniques of data collection in order to obtain the main results and the discussion, then finally a summary of the main findings, recommendations and suggestions for further future studies will bring the paper to its logical end.

Key words: Crisis, Lexical Change, Stylistic Change, Pandemic, Renewal, Covid 19, Language Shift, Awareness, Social Distance, Fatal Disease, Prevention.

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¹ Dr. , Omdurman Islamic University, Sudan, khalidsoon@hotmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1115-1114>

Introduction

Human languages are the social devices that help human beings express themselves through their joint social interaction in order to maintain their social solidarity in a community of interrelated social groups. As such human languages are expected to be directly affected by the social contexts in which languages are used. Therefore, human languages are always on the move to be changeable in order to be liable to respond to the needs of the attached communities. Human languages as a result of the changes and renewable essences are capable of absorbing the renewed circumstances on one hand, and on the other they are also capable of spreading and maintaining the existing human discoveries and inventions. Human languages are tools of acculturation through which human heritage and knowledge are transmitted from a generation to other generations and they are observed by those who are interested in such domains of humanities.

Periods of crises and hardships represent great linguistic challenges that encounter humanity. During such periods there is a great requirement for human languages to prove themselves valuable in serving humanity needs. A human language is needed to let its speakers express themselves in such periods and to help in raising awareness of such phenomena for the sake of overcoming the encountered disasters. The history of humanity in general is rich in such periods of crises and hardships; therefore, a rich experience is expected to be found concerning language changes and stylistic shifts. However, the current crisis of COVID19 is an activation of a long historical language heritage of challenge and shift. Human languages are expected to play great roles in fighting the consequences of this fatal disease. People need to know a lot about this pandemic in order to be ready to find instant solutions for the drastic consequences of the disease and to be also ready to find cure or precaution against the disease; hence, language is expected to be the medium through which all these processes can be put in the right track.

Since the occurrence of COVID 19 variety of research projects have been conducted to study the consequences of this fatal disease. However, the majority of these studies have tackled the negative and positive effects of the diseases either in the areas of the medical, social and economic perspectives of the disease. The present study is one of the attempts to study the linguistic consequences of the disease. The study runs mainly after the expected linguistic changes in the areas of morphology and lexicon in particular and discourse and style on the other side of the expected linguistic changes.

The Importance of the Study

This study is important in today's world where different kinds of challenges encounter humanity and threaten the existence of human beings on earth. Language is one of the tools that play a vital role in addressing humanity needs. Therefore, this study acquires its importance from the fact that it is an attempt to explore the urgent changes that happen in a language either to face crises or to raise human beings awareness of the expected dangers of the recurrent crisis. Secondly, the study is important due to the renewal of the interest on language and language change to enhance human languages survival. Moreover, this study is also important as it tries to link between the pure linguistic aspects of language and the economic issues mainly in its addressing of the possible stylistic changes in the form of language that is expected to be used in such eras of crisis because in such periods a of language changes and shifts that are expected to happen either to let people be aware of the crisis under investigation on one hand and on the other to utilize these shifts to gain economic advantages and profits. The study in its general perspectives is one of attempts to study the linguistic influences of the pandemic under investigation.

Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature; and to that end some of the essential related studies and literature will be reviewed, discussed and correlated with some essential linguistic concepts about language and its nature. The review of the related literature will cover areas of reasons and needs for language change, reactivating inactive expressions or coining new

terms or acronyms that address the crisis under investigation that is Corona Virus 2019, henceforth COVID 19. The essential quotations of the previous related literature or studies will be paraphrased, discussed and grouped according to the domains stated above. Moreover, our own observation on media and the general linguistic behavior among people will be stated to confirm the related studies and the hypotheses under investigation.

Procedures

As it has been stated within the methodology of this study that variety of related quotes from the previous studies will be outlined, discussed and correlated with the linguistic observations common during the crisis (COVID19). This kind of discussion and correlation aim at responding to the stated hypotheses in this present study mainly those of the reactivation of previous terminologies, coining of new terms and acronyms, and the resulting stylistic changes and shifts either in the form of the language as a pure linguistic entity or the economic requirements of the stylistic changes to get benefits out of the crisis.

Literature Review and Some Related Studies

The literature and the related studies to be discussed in this section will be grouped to handle three essential domains in this present study: first the studies that tackle the reactivation of archaic or classical related terminologies in periods of crises on one hand, and on the other the coining of new terminologies and acronyms, and finally the stylistic changes and shifts within such eras of crises and the expected linguistic and economic outcomes.

By its nature language is an essential human property that is always in processes of change and renewing to meet the necessary human advancement and progress. For De Saussure (1959: 76) language change is a must that no surviving language is capable of avoiding either in the structure of the sound system of the language or its meanings. That is to say language change makes it possible for people to express themselves in cases of material advancement or development. The same point was also stated by Wardhaugh (2006:192) who classified language change into two types internal which is seen in all the components of the language such as phonology or syntax, and the external change which is the change that resulted from the processes of borrowing from the other languages. Borrowing of course will supply a language with new sources of expressions or concepts to meet the novel and renewed linguistic or social requirements in the communities. Mesthrie et al. (2004: 218 – 19) differentiate between what they call vernacular change and prestige change; the first kind of change is that headed by men when the matter is related to vernacular or varieties of the same language; while the other kind of change is that change that is done mainly by the women of the community as a result of their prestige awareness in the community. By the change the language will be flexible with the ups and downs of their surrounding living circumstances. After a certain period of time, some obvious shifts can always be recorded. According to Lyons (1979: 34 – 35) language change is the consequence of some political or cultural perspectives by which in certain cases what was used to be a dialect might turn out to be a formal or a standard language by itself. The political or cultural perspectives should definitely imply the changes that we encounter in periods of crisis or catastrophes. In another similar dimension Bynon (1979: 206) discusses Labov's (1966) survey on changes of the pronunciation of /r/ sound which is generally affected by age or stylistic factors. In other words language is also affected chronologically with differences of ages or a cross generations or by stylistic or register or status factors. Language in general is a mirror that reflects what goes on in any given community. For Steinberg and Sciarini (2006: 28) the matter of age is taken as a factor of variability in the form of language that is used to address children, that is to say the way by which an adult is addressing a child changes according to the child's age. However, this variability of the form of address can be generalized in other communicative domains, i.e. our form of address is changeable

according to the person we address whether it is a factor of age, style, register, or other social or regional belongings. At each communicative act the speaker presents him/herself as a member of a specified linguistic group.

In their study of the history of English language Baugh and Cable (2005) introduce their survey of this history by mentioning the outlines of language change, or in other words the factors that can be traced as influential reasons of change such as factors of time, expansion, material or political changes. They also believe that the change is clearly seen in the vocabulary of words either in terms of the death of certain lexical items and the coining of new lexical items or the process by which existing items may expand their ranges of expressions or the acquisition of new concepts. They think that if a language stops changing the language may die at all. All these mentioned points are clearly observed in this present era of COVID 19 as we notice variety of expressions that can be classified as archaic or classical terms which are common in use in other similar crisis contexts, as it will explained below and with examples. However, a lot of new coined terms and expressions are also detected at this present time of the spread of the disease and almost in all languages. However, we feel that some expressions have acquired a universal recognitions as they are almost used all over the world such as COVID 19 and pandemic.

In their study of language change Denham and Lobeck (2009: 1 – 2) outline the essential elements of language change starting with the great shift that language comes across in the normal development of language acquisition or learning, or the other influential factors that lead to change either gender factors in terms of men's or women's forms of address, the social and the regional factors that lead to dialectical or stylistic language variations, or in other extremes the changes that happen within the status of the language to respond to certain linguistic needs for cultural or advancement factors mainly these of naming new inventions or cultural needs. These aspects of language variations are well known in sociolinguistics, and they are normally found in sociolinguistic studies under such titles of language and gender or social or dialectical changes, etc. In still another perspective Baugh and Cable (2005: 392) stated that the colonists who settled in a certain place need to widen their language experience in order to be able to incorporate new words and terminologies to address the new things that they found in the new areas they invaded. Out of such domination of power there are well known sociolinguistic phenomena which result from the contacts between superordinate groups and subordinate groups in order to find common grounds for communication and understanding; these are namely the cases of pidgins and creoles which are essentially created to solve communication problems among adjacent neighboring groups who lack a common ground for communication.

The discussed points up to now indicate that language change is a normal linguistic development in the status of the language across time. The change is a strong indicator of language liveliness and survival. The language changes to respond to humanity needs. It also changes to confirm continuity of human beings mastery of earth and to give people the requirements of dealing with the recurrent inventions and the renewed variability in all aspects of human beings social, regional, gender, age, register, style, etc. Language should change, otherwise human beings will lack an essential tool that on one hand distinguishes them from the other living creatures, and on the other they will lack the tool that is considered the first defensive body in humanity struggle against the threatening dangers and troubles.

After mentioning some related theoretical aspects, we move on to have a survey across some related studies or literature. As a starter we begin with the studies that tackled a generalized approach in the analysis of the influences of COVID 19 in terms of the positive or negative aspects of the pandemic on the economy or the social or health aspects. For example Sabir and Faraji (2021: 78) who studied the positive and negative implications of the disease on the psychological, social and health affairs of the Kurdish in Iraq. Some of their findings suggested that the pandemic led to positive consequences on the development of some health habits and self-exploration of individuals' health, and they also led to some positive influences on the social bonds of families. However, the negative influences could be

those of the bad consequences of the disease on the general health problems, and on the families' economic practices and deals as a result of the harmful consequences of the disease on the economy in general. In a more generalized perspective of the dangers that may encounter languages Simons and Lewis (2011: 1) did such a survey on the possible dangers that may face human languages. They based their survey on a study done by Krauss 1992. The most important findings of this survey are that more than 75% of human languages in the West are threatened by death and extinction. They classified these endangering factors to two central sources the first source is that of colonization with its two types either settlement or exploitation colonization. The second is that of urbanization or the drift from the rural areas to the urban areas; they believe that urbanization may have more or less the same consequences of colonization in the vanishing of some human languages or their varieties. The findings of this survey indicate that 63% of the world's languages maintain their existence through a continued oral usage of their languages and their varieties. 32% of the world's languages are endangered language to be vanished or extinct, while 5% of these languages have actually been extinct or dead languages that are no longer in actual use. This survey is related to our present study in terms of the fact that the spread of such a kind of disease may lead to a kind of drift from place to another place in search of better living or health conditions.

In another similar study by Stolarski (2013: 246) the speaker's style is affected by the addressee just in the same way when it is affected by the formality standard of the context. In this present study the style is expected to be affected by the status of the pandemic of Corona Virus (Covid 19). As it is observed that variety of practices mainly in media are affected by the consequences of the disease. We observe that a lot of advertisements shifted their interests to incorporate in their production something about Covid 19 for two purposes on one hand to draw the audiences' interests to their products, and on the other to gain some financial rewards and benefits.

In their study of the coining of new words and terms 'neologism', Asif et al. (2020) discussed the possibility of coining new words or terms in cases of pandemic or fatal diseases. They tackled all the possible newly coined words to discuss the wide spread of all the possible words or acronyms that resulted in particular from the spread of COVID 19. In table 1 below they enlisted some of the common abbreviations or acronyms related to COVID 19. This table is useful for this present study as it contains some of the important terms which are almost common or have similar lexicons in other languages all over the world. These abbreviations are directly connected with the common types of terminology needed in such cases and in other similar circumstances more other related abbreviations are also expected. Then in other similar tables they explained the most commonly used words in cases of similar common diseases or even fatal diseases such as SARS, AIDS or COVID 19. The words are put in a hierarchy from those on the top and the ones which are less commonly used. For example on the top we find words such as 'outbreak, novel, pandemic, deadly, case, Wuhan' and on the bottom we find the less used words such as 'spreading, patient, death, declare, etc.' It seems that their classification is based on whether the words are used as renewed words to be used to express the current wave of the disease, or either words that are still common words to be used in cases of normal less fatal diseases. The findings of this study confirm what we assumed at the beginning of this study that people may depend on either surviving old terms to discuss things related to the pandemic as in the first list of the words discussed above or in coining new acronyms or abbreviations as in table 1 above. Therefore, we find acronyms such as COVID 19 are more commonly used nearly all over the world as specialized acronyms of Corona Virus, and these of course look like the other acronyms which are coined in cases of similar diseases such as AIDS, SARS and so on. Hence, we can say that some kind of unification may happen in the use of certain terminologies to discuss the pandemic under investigation.

Table 1.
Abbreviation and Acronyms used during COVID-19 (Asif et al. 2020)

Abbreviation/Acronyms Description	Abbreviation/Acronyms Description
WFH "Working from home"	WFH "Working from home"
PPE "Personal protective equipment"	PPE "Personal protective equipment"
Covid-19 "COVID-19 is the name of the disease that the novel coronavirus causes. It stands for coronavirus disease 2019".	Covid-19 "COVID-19 is the name of the disease that the novel coronavirus causes. It stands for coronavirus disease 2019".
nCoV "Coronavirus disease 2019"	nCoV "Coronavirus disease 2019"
2019-nCoV "Coronavirus disease 2019"	2019-nCoV "Coronavirus disease 2019"
ARDS "Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome"	ARDS "Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome"
ARI "Acute Respiratory Infection"	ARI "Acute Respiratory Infection"
CDC "Centres for Disease Control and Prevention"	CDC "Centres for Disease Control and Prevention"
PUI "Patient Under Investigation"	PUI "Patient Under Investigation"
PCR "Polymerase chain reaction"	PCR "Polymerase chain reaction"
SARS-CoV-2 "Novel coronavirus 2019 is the name of the disease caused"	SARS-CoV-2 "Novel coronavirus 2019 is the name of the disease caused"

In a survey by Federici et al. (2019: 1) they pointed out that in cases of crises the kind of successful interaction is the key for providing better humanitarian services to the community in need of such services. The more effective the language is the more effective the service will be. Then they enlisted some of the most important findings as follows:

First the study subjects agreed that having a better access to a language helps in providing better humanitarian services; however, to find such an access is not handy at present due to certain limitations.

Second there is some kind of 'consensus' approaching a language efficiency is necessary for providing better services to the affected communities.

Third it is not easy to find an access to a language that serves as an effective means of communication for providing better humanitarian services.

Fourth getting access to a certain effective language costs a lot of money and effort.

Fifth there is a gap in practices that result in providing poor services to the affected communities.

This study tackles directly the importance of the effective communication for providing better humanitarian services to the communities in need; in other words language is the medium through which the crisis is understood and through which a better service will be provided to at least reducing the drastic consequences of the crisis. Therefore, in such crises

we expect more or less to find some kind of consistency or conformity in the form of address or language to discuss the crisis under investigation. We feel that COVID 19 attains such language conformity all over the world to the extent that its terminologies, abbreviations and acronyms are known at least in the cultured communities of the world. However, more efforts are needed to attain more effective language discourse and communication for solving the hardships and the drastic consequences of this fatal disease.

In another study Piller et al. (2020: 503) tackle a very important issue that is connected with the exchange of information concerning the Corona Virus Pandemic depending mainly on the use of English language as seemingly a lingua franca and neglecting the diverse multilingual context of the other affected communities. The study sees that sociolinguistics should lend a hand in solving such language difficulties in times of crises. The study ended with some implications about the role of sociolinguistics to lend a hand in solving problems of English centric means of communication and the neglect of the other multilingual contexts in such periods of crisis; these implications can be summarized as follows:

First there is a need for 'sociolinguistics' to activate these local languages to play vital roles away of the supremacy of English centric circles for more language awareness in periods of crises.

Second sociolinguistics, as a product of the twentieth century complexities, should direct attention to the multilingualism situation outside this English centric direction of communication.

Third sociolinguistics should address policy makers and 'activists' for more language awareness and comprehension.

This study concerns itself with the importance of language in helping affected communities to understand and react with the crisis under investigation because language is the tool of raising awareness and the tool for setting up defenses against the crises and fatal diseases.

Discussion, Results, Conclusion and Recommendations

In the light of the literature reviewed in this present study and the observations and practices seen within the ongoing crisis of Covid 19, it is obvious that languages all over the world and in particular English language have undergone a lot of modifications and renewed processes either in the styles or lexicons used to incorporate the pandemic influences in the lives of people or even in their economic practices and behavior. Language changes and modifications are needed in order to raise awareness about the danger of the disease on one hand, and on the other this is a central phenomenon in the nature of any living human language because language change is an indicator that language is capable of addressing its speakers' needs; and as far as language is successful in responding to its speakers' needs that language deserves to be classified as a living language.

In such periods of crises language practices and behavior may either be of coining new acronyms, lexical items and expressions on one side of the picture, or it may be just a more intensive use of ordinary normal terminologies that are used in such cases of crises or diseases. COVID 19 and Pandemic can be instances of the first type of language behavior; the first one is an example of a coined acronym while the second is an example of a lexicon that is rarely used except in the occurrence of such fatal diseases. Such acronyms are nearly well known medical terminologies that are commonly used in such cases of similar fatal diseases such as SARS and AIDS as have been stated above. The second type of language behavior can be that of the lexicons in use in cases of normal less fatal diseases such as spreading, death, patient, and so on. Specialists in the medical field or may also be common among ordinary unspecialized people. These lexicons can also be common among However, the use of the second list of the types of expressions to be used in cases of crises may range in their use from top in the list to least in the list. Crises and fatal diseases have definitely great influences on the forms of language use due to the importance of language in helping people develop a good understanding of the type of crisis or disease; the more the

people express themselves in the period of the crisis, the more and better understanding they will have about that crisis and disease, and this of course will help people reduce the possible expected dangers or lost.

Language awareness in periods of hardships and crises may also play a great socioeconomic role in helping languages all over the world to exchange knowledge and to mix up the codes. Therefore, in this present crisis of COVID 19 it is observed that the terms used to discuss this fatal disease may be well known and widely spread in their dimension of use the world wide, and they have been widely used as icons of commercial advertisements as a matter of economic awareness of gaining profits in such periods of crises.

Moreover, the pandemic have also great influences on the styles used to address the requirements of the crisis, and this could clearly be seen in the great changes that the commercial or medical advertisements in the different media channels. These changes may either be for financial reasons to gain more economic rewards and benefits, or for pure medical or social reasons to help people reduce or avoid the drastic consequences of the disease or to raise their awareness about the danger of the disease so as to be able to continue living with this disease. With reference to the discussed studies and the general observations to be noticed about language use during COVID 19, it is clear that language practices and use reflect a great understanding of this fatal disease, and we feel that through language great feelings of sympathy and belonging to humanity have started to be noticed in different communities; this could clearly be seen in the video extracts common in the different media where heartfelt and warm greetings are exchanged between people and medical teams from different races and nationalities when they are received in different affected countries. Moreover, these language practices indicate clearly that languages construct solid grounds to either raise communities' awareness of danger and crises on one hand, and on the other they are also flexible social devices to use the existing linguistic vessels to understand the changes and to build on them to coin or develop new vessels to express clearly the new developments and changes.

Out of the discussed studies and the personal observations and practices we can sum up the discussion on the following points:

First COVID 19 is a crisis experience in which language is a fundamental issue of raising awareness about the pandemic and setting defenses against its fatal consequences.

Second there are linguistic practices that can be classified as archaic classical language uses which are not affected by the pandemic and they are in use in normal medical practices.

Third they are still other linguistic practices which are consequences of such pandemic periods but they have been as well established processes mainly in naming the fatal diseases.

Fourth language practices depend on intensive shifts and coining of new specialized terminologies related to the pandemic under investigation.

Fifth COVID 19 has been a chance of some kind of code mixing among different languages due to the fame that its terms have acquired all over the world.

In the light of these points the coming section will give a summary for the main findings of this study.

The Findings of the Study

Out of the above discussed points the following points will present the essential findings of this present study:

1. The pandemic has led to the activation of old language terminologies and lexical items.
2. New acronyms have been coined to address the crisis.
3. The role of the language as a first line of defense in crisis is confirmed
4. Language style shift is used to raise economic rewards and advantages
5. Language change and shift help in raising people's awareness of the disease.
6. The pandemic has activated code switching the worldwide.

In the light of these findings the next part of the study will state the central recommendations and suggestions for further future studies.

Recommendations and Suggestions for Further Studies

In the light of this study the following recommendations and suggestions will help to direct attention for further future research projects:

1. A Comparative Study between English and Arabic on Aspects of Stylistic and Lexical Shifts in Crisis.
2. Economic and Financial Rewards of Language Shift and Change.
3. Code Switching in the Light of Language Shift and Change in Periods of Crises.
4. Positivity and Negativity of Lexical and Stylistic Shifts in Pandemics and Hard Times.

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